

Creating Entrepreneurial Communities

Making Communities a Better Place for Entrepreneurs to Grow and Prosper

The Creating Entrepreneurial Communities (CEC) program, developed and led by the MSU Extension Economic Development Team, in collaboration with its partners, set a goal of improving Michigan's economy by encouraging entrepreneurship within communities. This multi-year initiative has several components.



COMMUNITY SUPPORTED ENTREPRENEURSHIP CONFERENCE

The CEC initiative, launched on October 26, 2006, with a conference, welcomed over 200 people in Lansing to learn more about community supported entrepreneurship. Participants, primarily representatives of economic development agencies and nonprofit entrepreneurial support organizations from around the state, heard from Dr. Tom Lyons, noted authority on the field, and spokespeople of several "best practice" communities. Chris Holman, Michigan Small Business Advocate, moderated a panel discussion of mid-Michigan entrepreneurs who described their experiences in starting businesses in Michigan, from which participants developed more of an appreciation of the barriers and opportunities to small business development that entrepreneurs experience at the local level. At the conclusion of the conference, participants were invited to submit applications to be selected for a pilot community coaching program to create programs that encourage entrepreneurship.



PILOT COMMUNITY COACHING PROGRAM

From the conference launch, 14 applications were received in December, 2006, to be selected for the pilot community coaching program, and to develop a local program that supports entrepreneurs. Selection criteria included: the quality of the proposed program; the composition of the community team; the communities' readiness for, and support of, such a new program; the program and communities' willingness to serve as a model for other Michigan communities. Six reviewers, representing the partners of the CEC, considered the applications and selected 10 for the pilot program.



Community Teams:

Communities of leaders interested in developing a local program that supports entrepreneurs. Teams consist of at least 4 or more community leaders representing nonprofit organizations, businesses, education, and government. Once a program concept is selected, the team identifies and secures the resources necessary to develop and implement the program, then promotes it within the community so it can be utilized. Each team selects a team captain who serves as the primary contact person and communications liaison. Team members serve as the core leadership group for the project, though additional resource people likely serve in other capacities as the program develops. Communities are asked to pay a one-time registration fee of \$5,000/team to participate in the CEC pilot communities program. This fee pays for 4 team members to attend the Energizing Entrepreneurship workshop, receive coaching services for a year, attend the wrap up workshop at the Edward Lowe Foundation, and participate in the CEC network with other communities.

The ten pilot communities selected, and those who submitted the applications, include:

Boyne City	Hugh Conklin
Charlevoix/ East Jordon combined	Jacque Merta and David White
Ionia	Diane Smith
Marine City	Georgia Phelan
Meridian Township	Paul Brake
Midland	Jess Atwell
Newago	Valerie Byrnes
Northeast Michigan Council of Governments	Laura Ingles
St. Clair County	Geoff Donaldson
South Haven	Rachel Vochaska

Coaches:

Facilitators of the team's program development, ones who recommend approaches or tacks to solve conflicts, considers resources that may be useful and available to the team, and recommends communications strategies. The coach receives special training to help teams overcome barriers, communicate effectively, and reach their goals. Coaches are distinctly different from team members, not having decision making authority or program "ownership". As such, they retain a neutral and objective position within the group in the role of facilitator. When the program is launched and the coach leaves the project, the program should be sustainable. Coaches were selected from MSU Extension, SBTDC, and from within the pilot communities. All have professional experience in economic development. The CEC head coach advises the community coaches and provides the networking infrastructure so that coaches function as a learning community. The head coach is Dave Ivan, member of the MSUE Economic Development team and Director of MSUE Clinton County. He also serves as a back up coach if one should become unable to complete the program for any reason.

The community coaches include:

Mary Ann Heidemann, MSUE Economic Development team member and MSUE Director for Arenac County
Sue Pigg, MSUE Economic Development team member and MSUE Economic Development Educator, Ingham County Economic Development Corporation
Diane Smith, MSUE Economic Development team member and MSUE Economic and Community Development Educator
Andy Hayes, MSUE Economic Development team member and President of Northern Lakes Economic Alliance
Mark Thomas, MSUE Economic Development team member and MSUE Economic Development Educator
Ron Steiner, MSUE Economic Development team member and MSUE Regional Entrepreneurship

Educator, Director of the Starting Block, Inc.
Brandon Schroeder, District Sea Grant Extension Educator
Christine Greve, MI-SBTDC Regional Director
Laura Ingles, Economic Development Specialist for Northeast Michigan Council of Governments

The Pilot Community Coaching Program's Phases

COACH TRAINING

Coaches participate in weekly conference call meetings to study coaching techniques. Learning from Robert Hargrove's book, *Masterful Coaching*, the dialogue is led by Dr. Scott Loveridge of the Department of Agricultural Economics. Additional coach training is provided by Dr. Mary Emery of the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development at Iowa State University, who will spend a day working with coaching before the Energizing Entrepreneur's Institute.

ENERGIZING ENTREPRENEURS INSTITUTE (e²)

Teams and their coaches will convene at Brook Lodge in Augusta, Michigan, from February 20-23 to further refine their community projects, learning from the RUPRI, the National Center for Rural Entrepreneurship. Workshop conveners, Karen Dabson and Mary Emery, will lead the community teams through a balanced program of entrepreneurial education and team exercises, concluding with a plan of action and enhanced set of resources each team will build upon. During this time, coaches will also receive additional training to develop their skills as effective facilitators. In this rural, retreat environment, teams and their coaches will also have an ideal setting to build trust and establish common goals.

Program Leaders:

Karen Dabson is Director of Program Development, RUPRI Center for Rural Entrepreneurship and Owner, OrgMent. Karen focuses on cultivating entrepreneurial efforts and special projects and training that help enhance economic growth in rural communities. Her key responsibilities include development, refinement, promotion, and execution of the Center's Energizing Entrepreneurs (e²)™ product line. She is occasionally involved in qualitative research regarding rural innovative practices related to entrepreneurship and economic development, and has crafted mini-case studies about them. Karen also owns and operates OrgMent, a consultancy guild that helps augment the impact that nonprofits can have. Karen's 30 years of experience range from the long-time leadership of the Enterprise Development Corporation, a rural CDFI and senior positions with the CDFI Fund, U.S. Treasury, and Ohio Department of Development to senior advisor with the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland (FRB), and community development finance consultant. Her community involvement efforts have resulted in the founding of a community development credit union, and the development of a social enterprise. With her co-authors, Karen recently published "Energizing an Entrepreneurial Economy: a Guide for County Leaders," for the National Association of Counties. In 2006, she also wrote the Missouri Community Conversations Final Report and Executive Summary. Karen is nationally recognized for her works on microenterprise, including *Microenterprise Lending: A Cookbook for Mutual Success*; the original Ohio Microenterprise Lending Guide; and "I Love Being Self-Employed," a FRB video. She is a board member of the national microenterprise trade organization, Association for Enterprise Opportunity (AEO). Dabson holds a MS from Case Western Reserve University, and a BA from Purdue University.

Mary Emery is the Associate Director of the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, located at Iowa State University. This Center is one of four regional centers coordinating rural development research and education throughout the United States. It is supported by land-grant universities of the North Central region, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and grants and contracts from private

foundations. Their mission is to strengthen the ability of the land-grant system and its partners to help build rural community capacity, create vibrant and sustainable economies, and cultivate inclusive approaches to governance to enhance regional well-being. The NCRCD also provides leadership in rural development regionally and nationally by identifying, developing and supporting programs on the vanguard of emerging issues.

About the e² Institute:

Every year, the RUPRI Center for Rural Entrepreneurship offers a dynamic, interactive institute, called the Energizing Entrepreneurs (e²) Institute, based on its continuing research and long experience in the field. Now this model is available on a nationally distributed basis in an effort to provide more communities with the essential tools and resources to work toward becoming entrepreneurial.

The overall goals of the e² Institute are to promote a thorough understanding of entrepreneurship as a vital rural economic development strategy, and to give practitioners, locally elected officials, and residents the training and tools to take entrepreneurial action in their rural communities. All participants receive a copy of the book, *Energizing Entrepreneurs*. Specifically, the program has these training outcomes:

Participants will be certified and licensed to provide e² training.

Participants will have begun to develop plans for implementing e² principles, and training, in their regions.

Participants will have the opportunity to develop a beginning support network for e² training, and more generally, to encourage entrepreneurship development in their regions.

Schedule for the Michigan e² Institute February 20-23, 2006 www.energizingentrepreneurs.org

Day One	<p>Introductions and Overview</p> <p>Module I: Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurship</p> <p>Module II: Making the Case for Entrepreneurial Communities</p> <p>Evening panel discussion with entrepreneurs</p>
Day Two	<p>Assets Mapping in Your Community</p> <p>Module III: Understanding and Targeting E Talent</p> <p>Models and Case Studies</p> <p>Youth Entrepreneurship</p> <p>Evening group work time</p>
Day Three	<p>Module IV: The Entrepreneurial Environment</p> <p>Module V: Entrepreneurship Development Systems (EDS)</p> <p>Elements of Successful Practice, Case Studies</p> <p>Pulling it All Together</p> <p>Evening group work time</p>
Day Four	<p>Module VI: Sharing Community Game Plans</p> <p>Articulating and Sharing “Next Steps”</p> <p>Group wrap up work time over lunch, and “Graduation”</p>

COMMUNITY PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT and IMPLEMENTATION

Throughout the year, teams and coaches will be working on their specific project proposals, seeking resources and executing their plans. Communication among the teams will also be facilitated to foster community-to-community mentoring. Collectively, the networking and sharing of resources during this phase will help develop a statewide body of community leaders who are all working on the common goals of encouraging entrepreneurship.

COMMUNITY PROGRAM REPORTING, NETWORKING, and ASSESSMENT

Near the end of the year teams and coaches will be invited to the Edward Lowe Foundation facility in Cassopolis, Michigan, to share their experiences, and to assess the quality of both the CEC initiative, and their own respective projects. The CEC Research Team will be present to capture this assessment, and to additionally collect data from each participating team. Based upon these conclusions, the CEC initiative may be renewed for a second round of community team selections and coaching.

The CEC Research Team is a group of internal and external partners who provide leadership to the research program studying the potential impact this initiative will have on communities. The team is led by Dr. Laura van Egeren, Assistant Director for MSU University Outreach Partnerships. Nationally, there is no quantitative data on the impact programs have on entrepreneurial activity. The evaluation team will conduct an inventory of a communities' economic situation both pre- and post-CEC pilot team coaching activities. The study will advise future programs on factors that influence the effectiveness of the coaching approach.

CEC ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

Program sponsors and partners are organizations who invest money and/or in-kind support to the project. They also served on the pilot community selection committee and provide ongoing advice, access to resources, and support to the project. Sponsors and partners, and their pledges include:

MSU Extension

\$25,000 for the overall initiative, plus in-kind support

MSU University Outreach and Engagement

\$10,000 for research, plus in-kind support

MSU Product Center

\$ 5,000 for the conference, plus in-kind support

Michigan Economic Development Corporation

\$10,000 for the conference

Michigan Department of History, Arts, and Libraries

\$10,000 for the pilot community program, plus in-kind support

Edward Lowe Foundation

Hosting of the evaluation meeting, plus in-kind support

Michigan Small Business Development and Technology Centers

In-kind support

The overall Project Coordinator provides administrative services, communications, publicity, and serves as liaison among the various components. The CEC coordinator is Dr. Barbara Fails, co-chair of the MSUE Economic Development team and Assistant Director of the MSU Product Center. Periodic press releases will highlight pilot community activities.

For more information, contact:

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